

## Ojeda, Jose

---

**From:** Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC) <GOHSEP-EING2@LISTSERV.DOA.LA.GOV> on behalf of Ronnie Simpson <rsimpson@stpgov.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 25, 2015 4:14 PM  
**To:** GOHSEP-EING2@LISTSERV.DOA.LA.GOV  
**Subject:** Update 02252015



### **Update: Ongoing Inquiry into Melioidosis Illness at Tulane National Research Center**

Late November 2014, two non-human primates in the breeding colony at the Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC), a private research facility, became ill. In mid- December 2014, samples submitted to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified Burkholderia Pseudomallei as the causative agent. This strain of bacteria is not endemic in the US but was the subject of research at TNPRC. Because Burkholderia Pseudomallei is a tier 1 agent and the material was considered not in containment, the CDC and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) initiated a joint investigation of TNPRC in January 2015. As part of the investigation conducted January 20-24, federal and state scientists visited the TNPRC site to conduct epidemiological study and to review lab practices to determine possible route of transmission.

Animal IB22, one of two animals initially confirmed with Burkholderia pseudomallei infection, was euthanized last week at the recommendation of TNPRC veterinarians. IB22 had previously resolved all signs related to Burkholderia infection after receiving a course of antibiotics, the last dose of which occurred on January 5, 2015. Since that time IB22 has been monitored in the hospital. Over the past week, IB22 demonstrated decreased appetite and was examined by the veterinarian in charge on Thursday, Feb. 19. During the examination, two skin ulcerations and testicular swelling were noted. Several veterinarians were consulted and agreed that another course of antibiotic therapy should not be attempted. A decision to humanely euthanize the animal was made. Samples are being collected for submission to the CDC and the TNPRC clinical pathology laboratory.

Recently, one of the investigators fell ill with unspecific symptoms. A blood test was conducted and test results from Friday, February 6th indicated a presence of antibodies in the blood indicating some exposure to BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI. The investigator was discharged from the hospital Sunday and she is no longer sick. The person's travel history does include a visit to a region that may have provided an opportunity for exposure. Federal and state agencies are aggressively trying to determine if the illness was related to the facility visit or past travel.

The other members of the investigative team are being tested for possible exposure to the bacteria for baseline comparison and possible future diagnosis. This testing will provide some indication regarding route of transmission.

The CDC, USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are working with Tulane University as well as state and local officials to identify, isolate, mitigate and prevent further transmission of BURKHOLDERIA PSEUDOMALLEI within TNPRC. Environmental testing, including air, water and soil sampling, have been negative to this point.

**Situational Update: Wednesday, February 25, 2015, as of 2pm CST:**

**CDC:**

-Additional testing last week indicated a fourth non-human primate exhibited antibodies to *Burkholderia pseudomallei* at the Tulane National Research Primate Center breeding colony. The animal's only contact with the three others monkeys (two of which were diagnosed with Melioidosis and the other just showing an immune response to exposure) was at the center's veterinary clinic. CDC and USDA/APHIS investigators, as part of their ongoing efforts, will focus efforts on the veterinary clinic as a possible source of cross-contamination between the animals. The investigation into how the bacteria may have migrated to the primate colony from the select agent laboratory continues.

-Another blood sample is planned for the USDA/APHIS select agent inspector who visited the research center in January 2015 and whose previous two blood samples indicated a consistent immune response to exposure to *Burkholderia pseudomallei*. That sampling has been delayed because of severe winter weather in the select agent inspector's home state. This test result will help CDC experts determine if the inspector's exposure to the bacterium was at the primate research center in January or from a previous event. The inspector indicated to a CDC epidemiologist on Feb. 7, 2015, that she had traveled previously to a region of the world where *Burkholderia pseudomallei* is endemic.

-CDC is committed to the health security of Americans and will continue to fully investigate this incident.

**Tulane:**

-Continues to work with federal and state officials to determine how the non-human primates may have contracted the bacteria.

**Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals:**

Monday, the DHH state laboratory shipped human serology samples to the CDC facility. The samples should arrive this week.

-

**\*\*\*State agencies and St. Tammany Parish are in the process of developing both short and long range monitoring plans to be carried out by Tulane and the federal agencies involved in the oversight of this private facility.\*\*\***

Melioidosis, also called Whitmore's disease, is an infectious disease that can infect humans or animals and is treatable with antibiotics. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.

It is predominately a disease of tropical climates, especially in Southeast Asia and northern Australia where it is widespread. The bacteria causing melioidosis are found in contaminated water and soil. It is spread to humans and animals through direct contact with the contaminated source. It is not known to spread from human to human or from animal to human.

CDC's role is to protect the health and safety of researchers and the public. For more information about melioidosis, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/melioidosis/index.html>. Questions regarding the investigation and remediation activities should be directed to CDC (Jason McDonald) at 404-387-3660. Questions regarding the TPNRC facility should be directed to Tulane

(Mike Strecker) at 504-512-1347. All other questions or concerns should be directed to Mike Steele at [Mike.Steele@La.gov](mailto:Mike.Steele@La.gov).

###



Ronnie Simpson  
Director of Public Information &  
Intergovernmental Relations

St. Tammany Parish Government  
Department of Public Information  
985-898-5243  
[rsimpson@stpgov.org](mailto:rsimpson@stpgov.org)  
[www.stpgov.org](http://www.stpgov.org)

Any e-mail may be construed as a public document, and may be subject to a public records request. The contents of this e-mail reflect the opinion of the writer, and are not necessarily the opinion or policy of St. Tammany Parish Government.